DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 414 792 HE 030 685

AUTHOR	Helm, Edward G.; Sedlacek, William E.; Prieto, Dario O.
TITLE	Career Advising Issues for African American Entering Students. Research Report #2-97.
INSTITUTION	Maryland Univ., College Park. Counseling Center.
PUB DATE	1997-00-00
NOTE	19p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Advising; *Black Students; *Career Counseling; Career Planning; *College Freshmen; *Educational Attitudes; Graduate Study; Higher Education; Models; Referral; Role of Education; Sex Differences; Socioeconomic Influences; *Student Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS	*African Americans; University of Maryland College Park

ABSTRACT

A total of 343 first-year, African-American students at the University of Maryland College Park completed a questionnaire on a variety of topics including career and advising issues to determine the career needs and interests of these students. The reasons African-American students most often reported for going to college were to get a better job (25 percent), to develop themselves generally (22 percent), to gain a general education (14 percent), and to prepare for graduate school (14 percent). Females (42 percent) were more likely to remain in college so they could attend graduate school than were males (21 percent). When asked about barriers to their career goals, females (39 percent) cited personal finances more often than did males (28 percent), while males (22 percent) more often cited lack of motivation than females (8 percent). While there was some interest in career counseling among all the students, females expressed more interest than males. The results are discussed in relation to a model of career advising based on noncognitive variables, including how to make referrals to a career counselor. Tables provide mean and standard deviations by gender; list noncognitive diagnostic questions; and profile high and low scorers on noncognitive variables. (Contains 15 references.) (MDM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 414 792

COUNSELING CENTER

Office of Vice President for Student Affairs

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

College Park, Maryland

Career Advising Issues for African American Entering Students

Edward G. Helm, William E. Sedlacek, & Dario O. Prieto

Research Report # 2-97

IHE 130 685

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

University of Marvland

Counseling Center

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

COUNSELING CENTER
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
COLLEGE PARK, MARYLAND

Career Advising Issues for African American Entering Students

Edward G. Helm, William E. Sedlacek, & Dario O. Prieto

Research Report # 2-97

The computer time was provided by Academic Information Technology Services

COUNSELING CENTER
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
COLLEGE PARK, MARYLAND

Career Advising Issues for African American Entering Students

Edward G. Helm, William E. Sedlacek, & Dario O. Prieto

Research Report #2-97

Summary

A study of 343 African American first year students at UMCP who completed the University New Student Census showed their interest in a variety of career issues useful for advisors. For example, students most often reported going to college for job-related reasons and males were more likely to leave college to take a job than females. However, females were less sure of getting a job after graduation. A model of career advising based on noncognitive variables was discussed, including how to make referrals to a career counselor.

As students enter our colleges and universities in the late 20th century their focus is on career issues more than ever before (Hill & Sedlacek, 1995). For example, at one large eastern university 48% of the entering students expressed an interest in discussing career issues with faculty or a career counselor (Quinonez & Sedlacek, 1996).

African American students often enter their postsecondary institution with different experiences and expectations than other students. For example, African Americans have been shown to have less information on various career options than white students (Hill & Sedlacek, 1995). Additionally, they must learn how to deal with racial/cultural variables in considering career options (Sedlacek, 1994). For example, will they encounter more prejudice in some careers than others? Will they be hired because of their race and then not promoted? There is evidence that career interest measures may be racially biased (Sedlacek & Kim, 1995; Sedlacek, 1994) so the tasks of academic advising for African American students is complex and requires some skills and knowledge of the advisor. The focus here is on the role of the academic advisor since they are often the first contact a student will have on career issues. Academic advisors would appear to need two things to be successful with African American students on career issues.

(1) Information on the career needs and interests of African American students.

(2) Skill at deciding when to refer an African American student to a career counselor for further exploration of career issues.

The purpose of this study is to provide data on the first point and to discuss the data in the context of the second point.

Method

The entering freshmen at a large eastern university in 1996 completed a questionnaire on their needs and interests on a variety of topics including career and advising issues. African American students (N = 343) comprised 14% of the entering students (Male = 138, Female = 205).

Results

Table 1 shows the responses of African American students to attitude items by gender. All differences in responses discussed below are significant at the .05 level using multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA) or chi square.

Career Issues

The reason African Americans most often reported for going to college was to get a better job (25%) while 22% chose "to develop myself generally", 14% chose "to gain a general education" and 14% attended college primarily to prepare for graduate school. Females were more likely to remain in college so they could attend graduate school than were males (42% v 21%). Long term career goals differed by gender with males more often citing high earnings than females (29% v 17%), while females more often chose making a contribution to society than males (22% v 13%).

When asked about barriers to their career goals females chose personal finances more often than males (39% v 28%) while males more often choose lack of motivation than females (22% v 8%).

While there was some interest in career counseling among all African American students there was even more interest expressed by females than males (see Table 1).

Students felt they would still go to college, even if better jobs were available and expected to be able to find a job after graduation, although females were less sure than males.

Academic Issues

Table 1 shows students tended to be about equally sure or unsure about their major and expected their courses to be stimulating and exciting. Students also would seek help with reading and study skills if needed. Students felt they had someone to turn to if they had problems in school. Additionally they did not expect to have trouble adjusting to academic work, and females expected to have more difficulty with math than males.

Discussion

The finding that African American students had interest in seeking help with educational/vocational plans has been noted in other help-seeking studies with African American students (Boyer & Sedlacek, 1987; Hill & Sedlacek, 1990; Stabb & Cogdal, 1990; Webster & Fretz, 1978). Hargrove & Sedlacek (in press) found career counseling interests among African American students over a ten year period suggesting that addressing vocational issues within a counseling context should continue to be a primary focus of career and advising services for them. Findings from other studies have also tended to confirm those of the present study in that African American females are more likely to make greater use of counseling services than African American males (Cheatham, Shelton, & Ray, 1987; Hughes, 1987) and African American females have also had more previous counseling experiences (Stabb & Cogdal, 1992). However,

Hargrove & Sedlacek (in press) suggested that there may be no differences in career counseling interests between African American men and women. However, if we examine other differences found between African American men and women in the present study, such as the more practical job oriented reasons for African American males to attend college, the lower motivation of African American males makes career advising all the more critical for them.

But what kind of advising/counseling services should be provided? The problems in assessing career or other needs in multicultural groups have been summarized and discussed by several writers.

Prediger (1993) discussed standards recommended by the American Counseling Association and attention to norming, validity and reliability for diverse populations were noted. We do not tend to design assessment instruments for use with different racial/cultural populations. Sedlacek (1994) noted five problems in assessment with diverse populations which included problems in adequately defining groups, feeling that a single measure could work equally well for all groups, doing research that does not consider differences among groups, working with biased samples and poor multicultural training for assessment specialists.

Stabb and Cogdal (1992) found that African American male college students have been shown to express career concerns, but were also interested in personal/social issues such as assertiveness and self-esteem. Sedlacek (1991) has suggested a model based on noncognitive variables that can be used in academic advising or counseling with African American students as well as other racial/cultural groups. Use of the noncognitive variables allows advisors or counselors to consider ideas such as self concept, handling racism, realistic self appraisal and leadership in working with students (see Table 2). The noncognitive variables can be assessed

using the Noncognitive Questionnaire (NCQ) or through interviewing techniques. Additionally, Helms (1992) has developed a model of assessing racial identity which could be used effectively with the noncognitive variables in providing professionals with a broader base in approaching career issues for African American students.

To assess noncognitive variables, an advisor should listen carefully in a kind of scanning posture using Table 3. As a student touches on something that appears relevant, it should be probed. Questions can be phrased more directly if this scanning procedure does not yield enough information, providing rapport is sufficiently established. For instance, the question of how a student finds the interracial environment at the school might be asked directly if the issue has not come up otherwise.

If the advisor feels that insufficient information has been obtained to properly advise the student or that more basic career counseling is needed the student should be referred to a career counselor for future assistance. Sedlacek (1991) suggested that in many cases it may be best to make an initial assessment using noncognitive variables and then refer the student to someone else, even a fellow advisor, since it is difficult for the same person to uncover an issue and then try to resolve it. In making referrals it is recommended that advisors make specific referrals to other services or individuals and follow through to see that contact was made. For example, it would be better to refer the student to a specific person or unit of the career center, rather than to just indicate that the student should go to the center. Additionally, the advisor should request that the student report back on how things went at the career center. Sedlacek (1991) also recommended a number of interviewing principles that an advisor might employ. For example, he recommended the advising session begin with a topic that is secondary but of interest to both student and

advisor. In this way rapport can be established before the critical areas are covered. Another principle discussed was to avoid putting the student on the defensive. In the case of resistance by the student particularly resulting from a difference of opinion, one should yield as much as possible.

Another key point raised by Sedlacek (1991) was to give advice sparingly, if at all. If advice is requested, the advisor is encouraged to help the student review the options so that the student can decide on his/her own. Also it was recommended that something definite be achieved in each session. The session should not close until some agreement is reached on progress and next steps to be taken.

African Americans remain overrepresented in some fields and underrepresented in others (Murry & Mosidi, 1993) and it is imperative that as we approach the 21st century that the techniques of advising African Americans on career issues include all our available information. The more knowledgeable our advisors are the more likely we will be able to help and retain our African American students in higher education.

References

Boyer, S. P., & Sedlacek, W. E. (1987). Counseling expectations: Differences by gender and presenting problem. Counseling Center Research Report #13-87. University of Maryland, College Park.

Cheatham, H. E., Shelton, T. O., & Ray, W. J. (1987). Race, sex, causal attribution, and help-seeking behavior. Special Issue: Blacks in higher education. Journal of College Student Personnel, 28 (6), 559-568.

Hargrove, B. K., & Sedlacek, W. E. (in press). Trends in psychological help-seeking attitudes of entering Black university students over a ten-year period. Journal of the National Resource Center for The Freshman Year Experience and Students in Transition.

Helms, J. E. (1992). Why is there no study of cultural equivalence in standardized cognitive ability testing. American Psychologist, 47, 1083-1101.

Hill, M. D., & Sedlacek, W. E. (1995). Freshman counseling interests. Journal of the Freshman Year Experience, 7 (1), 27-37.

Hughes, M. S. (1987). Black students' participation in higher education. Special Issue: Blacks in U.S. higher education. Journal of College Student Personnel, 28 (6), 532-545.

Murry, E., & Mosidi, R. (1993). Career development counseling for African Americans: An appraisal of the obstacles and intervention strategies. Journal of Negro Education, 62 (4), 441-447.

Prediger, D. J. (1993). Multicultural assessment standards: A compilation for counselors. Alexandria Va: American Counseling Association.

Quinonez, C., & Sedlacek, W. E. (1996). A profile of incoming freshmen at the University of Maryland at College Park, 1995. Counseling Center Research Report #3-96. University of Maryland, College Park.

Sedlacek, W. E. (1991). Using noncognitive variables in advising nontraditional students. National Academic Advising Association Journal, 11 (1), 75-82.

Sedlacek, W. E. (1994). Issues in advancing diversity through assessment. Journal of Counseling and Development, 72, 549-553.

Sedlacek, W. E., & Kim, S. H. (1995). Multicultural assessment. ERIC/CASS Digest series on Assessment in counseling and therapy, EDO-CG-95-92. Greensboro, NC.

Snyder, J. F., Hill, C. E., & Derksen, T. P. (1972). Why some students do not use university counseling facilities. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 19, 263-268.

Stabb, S. D., & Cogdal, P. A. (1992). Black college men in personal counseling: A five year archival investigation. Journal of College Student Psychotherapy, 7 (1), 73-86.

Webster, D. W., & Fretz, B. R. (1978). Asian American, Black, and White college students' preferences for help-giving sources. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 25 (2), 124-130.

Table 1

Means* and Standard Deviations by Gender **for African American Students (N = 343) on Attitude Items

Item	Males (n = 138) Mean	SD	Females (n = 205) Mean	SD
If I run into problems concerning school, I have someone who would listen to me and help me.	1.88	.83	1.85	.93
I am not sure of my major.	3.65	1.35	3.64	1.42
I do not expect difficulty with math courses.	3.09**	1.23	3.55**	1.26
I do not expect to get a degree from (school name).	4.71	.83	4.61	.93
I expect that, for the most part, my course will be stimulating and exciting.	2.12	.80	2.22	.79
I do not anticipate problems getting the classes I want.	3.00	1.06	3.03	1.13
I will likely end up majoring in a different academic field from the one that now seems appropriate to me.	3.65	1.10	3.52	1.14
I do not expect to have trouble obtaining a job when I graduate.	2.45**	1.12	2.78**	1.07
I expect to have a hard time adjusting to the academic work of college.	3.05	.96	2.94	.98
I would like to design my own major rather than select one already established.	3.46	1.14	3.60	1.09
If better jobs were available to high school graduates, I would not go to college.	3.96	1.20	4.15	1.02

Table 1 (Continued)

Item	Males (n = 138) Mean	SD	Females (n = 205) Mean	SD
If needed, I would know where to go to seek help at (school name) regarding reading and study skills.	2.51	1.25	2.56	1.25
I am interested in seeking counseling regarding my career plans.	2.20**	1.00	1.94**	.98
My high school prepared me well for college.	2.31	1.16	2.51	1.18
I expect to transfer out of (school name) to another school.	4.04**	.95	3.79**	1.15

* 1 = Strong agree; 5 = Strongly Disagree
** Differences significant at .05 level using MANOVA

Table 2

Noncognitive Questionnaire for Diagnosis in

Advising Nontraditional Students

I. Positive Self-concept or Confidence. Strong self-feeling, strength of character. Determination, independence.

II. Realistic Self-appraisal, especially academic. Ability to recognize and accept any deficiencies and works hard at self-development. Recognizes need to broaden his/her individuality.

III. Understanding and dealing with Racism. Realist based upon personal experience of racism; committed to fighting to improve existing system; not submissive to existing wrongs, nor hostile to society, nor a "cop-out." Able to handle racist system; asserts school or organization role to fight racism.

IV. Preference for Long-range Goals over Short-term or Immediate Needs. Able to respond to deferred gratification.

V. Availability of Strong Support Person. Someone available to turn in crises.

VI. Successful Leadership Experience. Evidence of influencing others in any area pertinent to background (gang leader, church, sports, noneducational groups, etc.)

VII. Demonstrated Community Service. Involvement in his or her cultural community.

VIII. Knowledge Acquired in a Field. Unusual or culturally related ways of obtaining information and demonstrating knowledge; Field itself may be non-traditional.

Table 3

PROFILES OF HIGH LOW SCORERS ON NONCOGNITIVE VARIABLES*

	HIGH SCORE	LOW SCORE
1. POSITIVE SELF-CONCEPT OR CONFIDENCE	Feels confident of making it through graduation. Makes positive statements about him/herself. Expects to do well in academic and nonacademic areas. Assumes he/she can handle new situations or challenges.	Can express reason(s) why he/she might have to leave school. Not sure he/she has ability to make it. Feels other students are better than he/she is. Expects to get marginal grades. Feels he/she will have trouble balancing personal and academic life. Avoids new challenges or situations.
2. REALISTIC - SELF-APPRAISAL	Appreciates and accepts rewards as well as consequences of poor performance. Understands that reinforcement is imperfect, and does not overreact to positive or negative feedback. Has developed a system of using feedback to alter behavior.	Not sure how evaluations are done in school. Overreacts to most recent reinforcement (positive or negative), rather than seeing it in a larger context. Does not know how he/she is doing in class until grades are out. Does not have a good idea of how peers would rate his/her performance.
3. UNDERSTANDS AND DEALS WITH RACISM	Understands the role of the "system" in his/her life and how it treats nontraditional persons, often unintentionally. Has developed a method of assessing the cultural/racial demands of the system and responding accordingly; assertively, if the gain is worth it, passively if the gain is small or the situation is ambiguous. Does not blame others for his/her problems or appear as a "Pollyanna" who does not see racism.	Not sure how the "system" works. Preoccupied with racism or does not feel racism exists. Blames others for problems. Reacts with same intensity to large and small issues concerned with race/culture. Does not have a method of successfully handling racism that does not interfere with personal and academic development.
4. PREFERS LONG-RANGE TO SHORT-TERM OR IMMEDIATE NEEDS	Can set goals and proceed for some time without reinforcement. Shows patience. Can see partial fulfillment of a longer term goal. Is future and past oriented, and does not just see immediate issues or problems. Shows evidence of planning in academic and non-academic areas.	Lack of evidence of setting and accomplishing goals. Likely to proceed without clear direction. Relies on others to determine outcomes. Lives in present. Does not have a "plan" for approaching a course, school in general, an activity, etc. Goals which are stated are vague and unrealistic.

EXHIBIT 2 (Continued)

	HIGH SCORE	LOW SCORE
5. AVAILABILITY OF STRONG SUPPORT PERSON	Has identified and received help, support and encouragement from one or more specific individuals. Does not rely solely on his/her own resources to solve problems. Is not a "loner." Willing to admit that he/she needs help when appropriate.	No evidence of turning to others for help. No single support person, mentor, or close advisor can be identified. Does not talk about his/her problems. Feels he/she can handle things on his/her own. Access to previous support person may be reduced or eliminated. Is not aware of the importance of a support person.
6. SUCCESSFUL LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE	Has shown evidence of influencing others in academic or non-academic areas. Comfortable providing advice and direction to others. Has served as mediator in disputes or disagreements among colleagues. Comfortable taking action where called for.	No evidence that others turn to him/her for advice or direction. Non-assertive. Does not take initiative. Overly cautious. Avoids controversy. Not well known by peers.
7. DEMONSTRATED COMMUNITY SERVICE	Identified with a group which is cultural, racial and/or geographic. Has specific and long-term relationships in a community. Has been active in community activities over a period of time. Has accomplished specific goals in a community setting.	No involvement in cultural, racial or geographical group or community. Limited activities of any kind. Fringe member of group(s). Engages more in solitary rather than group activities (academic or non-academic).
8. KNOWLEDGE ACQUIRED IN A FIELD	Knows about a field or area that he/she has formally studied in school. Has a non-traditional possibly culturally or racially-based view of a field. Has developed innovative ways to acquire information about a given subject or field.	Appears to know little about or areas he/she has not studied in school. No evidence of learning from community or non-academic activities. Traditional in approach to learning. Has not received credit-by-examination for courses. Not aware of credit-by-examination possibilities.

Note. From Sedlacek (1991)